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SUBJECT: VISIT OF IRANIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

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Introduction and Summary

1.(U) A delegation of Iranian parliamentarians visited Vienna December 11-14 upon the invitation of the Austria-Iran parliamentary group. In meetings with the delegation, Parliamentary President Prammer (SPO) and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Schieder (SPO) criticized Iran's human rights record, called for Iran to comply with UN resolutions on its nuclear program, and expressed hope for Iran's support of the Annapolis peace process. End Introduction and Summary.

The Visit

2.(SBU) OVP MP Helmut Kukacka, head of the Austria-Iran parliamentary group, organized the visit together with the International Office of Parliament. The delegation consisted of six MPs headed by Mohammad Bagher Bahrami. The Iranian MPs' visit was a follow-up to a visit by Austrian Parliamentary President Werner Fasslabend to Iran two years ago. The delegation met with Austrian MPs from all parties, as well as the First and Second President of Parliament.

Meeting with MPs

3.(U) Discussions on December 11 with lawmakers from OVP and the opposition rightwing FPÖ and Greens focused on exploring possibilities for the expansion of bilateral economic relations. Kukacka particularly stressed the great interest of Austrian companies in engaging in business with Iran. He welcomed the "Iranian political program as the basis for a liberalization of the economy." While the other Austrian MPs emphasized that a rapprochement between the EU and Iran on the question of the Iranian nuclear program had to be reached, FPÖ MP Heinz Christian Strache noted Iran's right to have a civilian nuclear program. Even the CIA had now admitted that the Iranian nuclear program was peaceful, added Strache.

Parliamentary President Prammer

4.(U) First Parliamentary President Prammer stressed in her conversation with the delegation that Iran's compliance with the UN resolutions on the Iranian nuclear program was essential. She also warned that human rights and human dignity must be respected, and that the Holocaust must not be denied anywhere in the world. At the conclusion of the meeting Prammer noted that, despite the constructive climate of the encounter, marked differences of opinion remained.

Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Schieder

5.(U) Along the same lines, Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Schieder raised Iranian President Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial, the Iranian human rights situation, and the importance of EU-Iranian dialogue on the Iranian nuclear program at the meeting with the delegation. Schieder also expressed the hope that Iran would support the Annapolis peace process and would recognize Israel's right to existence.

Comment

6.(SBU) The visit was largely a formal occasion, with some opportunity to generally explore possibilities for expanded economic relations. The SPO parliamentary representatives, in particular, also voiced vehement criticism of the Iranian human rights record and non-compliance with UN resolutions on their nuclear program.

KILNER